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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 15 February 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to inform it that the Government of Chile has decided to put forward its candidacy for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2008-2011, elections for which will be held in May 2008 in New York.

The Permanent Mission of Chile has the honour to transmit herewith Chile's voluntary pledges and commitments to the protection and promotion of all human rights (see annex), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 15 February 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Aide-mémoire

The Republic of Chile has decided to put forward its candidacy for the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2008-2011, elections for which will be held in May 2008.

One of the basic pillars and objectives of Chile's foreign policy is human rights protection and promotion. This is attributable to our strong conviction regarding the worth and dignity of the human person and fundamental human rights and freedoms. It is also our response to our recent past, the main historical lesson of which is precisely the need for unconditional defence, everywhere and under all circumstances, of all fundamental rights and freedoms.

Nationally, the first step in the field of human rights following the return of democracy to Chile was the establishment in 1990 of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The main objective was to ascertain the truth of what happened during the military regime, identify the victims of human rights violations and their relatives, and grant the most appropriate means of compensation. The country made an unprecedented effort in this regard and continued to do so in subsequent years with the clear and firm purpose of seeking the truth and national reconciliation.

The way in which Chile approached the issue of human rights violations during the military regime has inspired a number of Latin American countries, which have viewed the Chilean model as an effective mechanism for confronting human rights violations under similar regimes and, at the same time, promoting the harmony and social peace essential to societies that have been torn apart by hatred, fanaticism, intolerance and violence.

Internally, too, Chile has given priority to respect for and observance of the human rights of minority groups and the weakest members of society, especially children, women, indigenous people, and all groups that are discriminated against in one way or another. Through a clear and resolute policy, Chile has emphasized recognition of cultural diversity as a right and a component of Chilean society in the twenty-first century.

This commitment to human rights protection and promotion is a national, cross-cutting commitment, based on a political and social consensus that has made it possible to place the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the forefront.

As a future member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Chile has made a commitment to advance these changes by pursuing legislative amendments designed to incorporate into its national laws the principal norms of international law that protect and promote human rights.

In the field of education, Chile will continue to implement courses on human rights. Most branches of the armed forces are currently teaching such courses as part of their mandatory training; the same applies to the rest of public education, in which the topic of human rights is addressed in citizen/civic training courses.

Internationally, Chile has participated in the principal human rights forums. It was a member of the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where it contributed to strengthening the universal human rights protection and promotion system, recognizing the special procedures system as one of the main tools for safeguarding those rights and underscoring the need to strengthen the procedures and enhance coordination among them to increase their effectiveness and avoid duplication of functions.

It should be recalled that the first special procedure to be established was in fact a working group on the situation of human rights in Chile that was formed in the 1970s. This working group ushered in the special procedures era and undoubtedly contributed at that time to raising the awareness of the international community about the human rights situation in Chile and warning of the grave violations committed by the Chilean military regime.

Chile has from the start urged the establishment of a Human Rights Council that contributes to respecting, promoting, and cooperating in all matters relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms and preventing their violation.

As a future member of the Council, Chile will continue to further all measures aimed at building a strong and effective body that emphasizes the search for consensus, transparency and equity in the treatment of issues, while always recognizing the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, including the right to development.

Chile has strongly promoted and supported standard-setting in various areas of human rights and has been involved in all negotiating processes aimed at establishing international instruments to improve human rights protection and promotion from a regulatory and legal perspective.

With respect to the competence of the international courts of human rights, Chile has, since 1990, recognized the compulsory jurisdiction and competence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Since that date it has cooperated substantially in strengthening the inter-American human rights protection and promotion system through voluntary financial contributions to the system and, in particular, through its firm determination to comply in a full and timely manner with the recommendations, judgements and decisions of both the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Lastly, the Republic of Chile has broad experience in promoting and protecting human rights, which emanates from its own conviction of the need to respect those rights as a guarantee of democratic stability, as well as the need to ensure that the dark events in our recent history involving human rights violations never recur in any part of the world.

Membership in the Human Rights Council will afford an opportunity for Chile to deepen its contribution to the universal human rights system, share its experience and help to strengthen the principle of respect for all human rights, which, alongside human development and security, are the foundations of an international system that places people at its centre.